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1. Prentiss's Strictures on A: Fuller

2. Do's - Vindication of Unitarians

3. Do — Moral tendency of the genuine Xian Doctrine

4. Estlin's Union of Wisdom and Integrity —

5. Wright's Catechism —

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STRICTURES

UPON

THE REPLY OF MR. A. FULLER,

TO

MR. KENTISH's DISCOURSE,

ENTITLED,

THE MORAL TENDENCY OF THE GENUINE CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF THAT DISCOURSE.

LONDON:

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IT may be proper to ſtate, that in the year 1796 the Author delivered at Exeter, before the Society of Unitarian Chriſtians eſtabliſhed in the Weſt of England, the Diſcourſe mentioned in the above title. In that Diſcourſe, which he wrote with reference to Mr. A. Fuller's Letters on Socinianiſm, and which he printed during the ſame year, he endeavoured to illuſtrate the moral tendency of the Unitarian doctrine under four heads of inquiry. He conſidered this doctrine with reſpect to—the cultivation and exerciſe of the divine, the ſocial, and the perſonal virtues—the aſſiſtance, ſupport, and conſolation afforded by it in the ſeaſon of temptation, affliction, and death—the converſion of profligates and unbelievers—a reverence for the Scriptures, and a ſolid faith in Chriſtianity. To the obſervations of the Author on theſe topics, Mr. Fuller has replied:—with what qualifications for the undertaking, and in what ſpirit, the Strictures here offered may perhaps aſſiſt the reader to determine.

ADVERTISEMENT.

STRICTURES, &c.

THE following conjecture with regard to the title of my ſermon has been advanced by our author: "it is poſſible that, by *the genuine Chriſtian* "*doctrine*, Mr. Kentiſh means what he ſincerely "*believes* to be ſuch, or what he calls the Unita-"rian doctrine."* It is *poſſible*, he ſays! Had he a doubt then, whether this were really my meaning? All doubt was excluded by the remainder of the title-page, and by the words which he has quoted from the preface. It could not be unknown to him, that the Calviniſtic and Trinitarian ſyſtems are ſtiled, in ſimilar language, by ſome defenders of them, *the doctrine of ſcripture*, *the primitive faith*, *real Chriſtianity*, and *vital Chriſtianity*.† With what conſiſtency,

* Page 54.

† See the title and the preface of Mr. Wilberforce's late performance; p. 6, of Mr. Fuller's pamphlet; and the title-page of his Letters. That of the publication (Socinianiſm indefenſible, &c.) upon part of which I am now animadverting, deſerves not the praiſe of correctneſs, or of modeſty.

therefore, and for what purpoſe, has he affirmed of my title, that it is " either irrelative, or an " aſſuming of the queſtion ?"

He next repreſents me as having declined a full diſcuſſion of the ſubject—and declined it from a perſuaſion that I ſtand upon diſadvantageous ground. * That his repreſentation may appear at leaſt plauſible, he chuſes to conſider my diſcourſe as a profeſſed and formal anſwer to his Letters on Socinianiſm. Muſt I remind him then, that it was written merely with *reference* to his work? Or has he yet to learn the import and extent of the term *reference?* My chief deſign was at once ſincere, avowed, and manifeſt: it was to illuſtrate the moral tendency of principles which I eſteem as the pure doctrines of the Goſpel. In ſubſerviency only to this purpoſe, I was led to an examination of certain remarks of Mr. Fuller. It is ſufficient if I have fulfilled, as far as I was able, my declared intention. Whether the " ſubſtance" of this author's piece, whether " the " body of his arguments" † be affected by my reaſoning, I am incompetent to determine. That the ſermon is not irrelative to the topic upon which I wrote it, his reply is an acknowledgment.

* Pages 54, 56.

† Preface, p. iii. and Reply, p. 54.

Profeſſing,

Profeſſing, nevertheleſs, to anſwer that diſcourſe, he often animadverts only upon ſentences, which he has ſelected from other writings; a practice too well adapted to miſlead the uninformed and incautious reader. The laws of fair and honourable controverſy fix a ſtigma on ſuch proceedings. Why muſt I deſire him to remember that I had purpoſely and explicitly forborn to notice thoſe parts of his publication which are perſonal, thoſe parts of it which contain ſtrictures upon living authors? I forbore to notice them from a regard to the juſt and obvious principle, that every man is reſponſible ſimply for his own arguments and poſitions.* Whether mine be at variance, or in harmony, with thoſe of preceding and contemporary writers, is a queſtion of comparatively trifling moment. It is my firſt wiſh, that they may not be found inconſiſtent with truth, with reaſon, and with the ſacred volume.

A reluctance to boaſt of our moral attainments is, according to my judgment, inſeparable from the humility which the Goſpel recommends. I

* Let no perſon underſtand me as here intimating that certain remarks of the writers upon whom Mr. Fuller has, in his Letters, animadverted, require a defence. The contrary is my perſuaſion. I wiſh only to obſerve that queſtions of this nature are altogether foreign to the diſcuſſion in which I have engaged.

have ſaid, therefore, in my diſcourſe: * "God "forbid we ſhould raſhly arrogate to ourſelves "ſuperiority of virtue!" What now is the method of reply here employed by Mr. Fuller, † who, on the behalf of the profeſſors of Calviniſm, has aſſerted ſuch ſuperiority? Does he ſhew that this my declaration is irreconcileable with any former, or any ſubſequent declaration which I have made? Has he proved that the ſentiment is contrary to the principles of ſound reaſon, and of genuine Chriſtianity? Nothing of this kind has he attempted. He contents himſelf in the preſent inſtance, with ſtating the obſervations and with criticiſing the language of other perſons.

In vain would he repel the charge of claiming infallibility. ‡ When he pronounced of Unitarian Chriſtians, that they have "a heart ſecretly diſ-"affected to the true character and government "of God, and diſſatisfied with the Goſpel way of "ſalvation," he expreſſed, it appears, a conditional propoſition. But what if his condition and his inference be equally preſumptuous? He appeals indeed, with a triumphant air, to the ſuppoſed conceſſions of ſome Unitarian writers. Neither with the language of thoſe writers, nor with Mr. Fuller's interpretation of it, am I in the leaſt

* Page 13. † Pages 56, 57.

‡ Pages 57, 60.

degree

degree concerned. I require thoſe deciſive and independent proofs of the fact, which might authoriſe him to intimate with truth and decency, that we are univerſally, or generally, deſtitute of ſubſtantial virtue. Mark, then, the argument by which he aims at ſhewing both that this intimation is juſt, and that we have granted it to be ſo. " It ſhould ſeem," he ſays, " by our oppo-" nents applying the latter branch of tne propo-" ſition to themſelves, they admit the former as " properly characteriſtic of their ſyſtem." He thus begins with the truly modeſt and benevolent condition, that we are " irreligious men,"—he thence concludes that our views of Chriſtianity muſt ariſe from " a heart ſecretly diſaffected to " the true character and government of God, &c."—and he next affirms, that becauſe we complain of being thus calumniated, we allow, by ſuch complaint, the reaſonableneſs of his preceding accuſations, or acknowledge ourſelves, in other words, to be of an irreligious character!

I will now follow him through his review of my preliminary obſervations.*

The firſt of them, he informs us, " equally " requires to be made in favour of Calviniſm, as " of Socinianiſm." My anſwer is, I have ac-

* Pages 60, 66.

 cordingly

cordingly made this obſervation with no excluſive reference to any ſect of Chriſtians.

To the ſecond remark he expreſſes an aſſent. He even aſſures us, that "for this reaſon, notwithſtanding all that is ſaid by his opponents "to the contrary, he has not preſumed to decide "upon the ſtate of individuals." It is, perhaps, unfortunate for the credit of his aſſurance, that he has, in one part of his reply,* ſpoken with little heſitation as to the religious condition and proſpects of thoſe opponents.

Nothing which is advanced by him reſpecting my third obſervation, diſproves its truth, or invalidates its force. Here, as upon many occaſions, inſtead of canvaſſing the opinion which I have delivered, he comments upon ſentences from other writings.

Upon the fourth remark he ſays, "that if the "concluſions which he has drawn be unreaſon"able, they are capable of being proved ſo." I ſubmit to the reader, whether ſuch proof have not been afforded by my ſermon. It is evident, however, that the concluſion to which I adverted, is the general inference from the ſuppoſed holy tendency of religious ſentiments in favour of thoſe ſentiments.

* Page 92.

That

That " in their ideas of moral excellence, diffe-
" rent ſects of Chriſtians may not exactly agree,"
is my next remark ; which is immediately follow-
ed by the ſentence—" I ſay not, that with reſpect
" to the great outlines of virtue, their ſentiments
" will vary." This ſentence, nevertheleſs, our au-
thor has judged fit to omit in his quotation. Hav-
ing concealed it from his readers, he proceeds to
enumerate practices, ſeveral of which imply a
total diſregard to " the great outlines of virtue,"
and which fall not, therefore, within the ſcope,
nay, which are even carefully excluded by the
very terms and ſpirit of the remark.

In the opinion of Mr. Fuller, my ſixth obſer-
vation, " if it prove any thing, proves that the
" moral tendency of a doctrine is no proper cri-
" terion of its truth." Now my words in the
beginning of the diſcourſe, are : " the truth of
" religious ſentiments ſhould, doubtleſs, be de-
" termined by the agreement of them with the
" Scriptures ; yet it is natural, and indeed juſt,
" to eſtimate their value by their efficacy."—
Speaking of their value and importance only, I
add, " in religion, the maxim *ye ſhall know them*
" *by their fruits*,* is a maxim, unqueſtionably, of
" high authority, evident reaſon, and familiar
" application." I am at the ſame time ſenſible,

* Matt. vii. 16.

that this celebrated ſaying is propoſed as a teſt of character, and not as a criterion of opinion. Chriſt is here warning his audience againſt teachers of religion, who conceal, under the maſk of ſanctity, the moſt ſelfiſh and immoral views. Of theſe men, he declares: "ye ſhall know them "by their fruits:"—"You will be able to aſcer-"tain their characters by their actions, and this "not leſs correctly than you decide, whether a "tree be corrupt or good, according to the na-"ture of the fruit which it produces." Alluding in a ſubſequent verſe* to the ſame perſons, he condemns them, not as the advocates of falſe doctrine, but as vicious and hypocritical profeſſors of Chriſtianity. In contradiction to the practice of many orthodox believers, he judges of Chriſtians not by their faith, but by their deeds. That ſuch is the ſenſe of the paſſage in queſtion, is farther evident from the correſponding place in Luke;† and it is obſervable indeed, that although virtuous and wicked men reſpectively are often deſcribed in the Scriptures as *trees*, yet this image is never employed to repreſent opinions. The declaration of Jeſus, however interpreted, is certainly found to be of familiar, or cuſtomary, uſe. But that in reference to the truth of religious doctrines, it is of eaſy or of legitimate ap-

* Matt. vii. 23. † Luke vi. 43.

plication,

plication, my language neither expreſſes nor implies. It is familiar to men to engage in undertakings, properly and ſucceſsfully to engage in which is a taſk of conſiderable difficulty; and of this plain diſtinction our author has been regardleſs.

As, however, he contends, that the truth or the falſehood of theological opinions is to be inferred from the conduct of thoſe who embrace them, it may be uſeful to examine into the reaſonableneſs of this inference. Men of reflection muſt ſurely be aware that it wants the moſt eſſential property of a fair deduction. No link here unites the concluſion with the premiſes. What neceſſary alliance is there between the truth of a religious creed, and its poſſible or ſuppoſed effects? The former can be proved only by the exerciſe of the underſtanding, by the aid of reaſoning; of the other we muſt judge from obſervation and experience. By ſuch an argument, in fact, we may demonſtrate the truth of doctrines which are obviouſly falſe. The honeſt and rapturous votary of the Romiſh faith feels his piety enkindled, and his virtue ſtrengthened by his participation in what he deems the body and the blood of his Redeemer. Hence, then, he may infer, upon our author's principle, that the doctrine of tranſubſtantiation is divinely true. I doubt not indeed, that ſome of the moſt "ſerious Chriſ-

tians," at the time of the Reformation, were the laſt to abandon a doctrine, the moral efficacy of which they thus conceived themſelves to feel.—Upon this principle we may alſo prove the truth of doctrines which are mutually irreconcileable. He who perceives (and who does not perceive?) that there are men of virtuous and exemplary character among both Catholics and Proteſtants, among both Calviniſts and Socinians, may conclude that the widely oppoſite tenets of theſe ſects and denominations are equally conſonant with the Scriptures. And in vain would you object to this concluſion, that we ſhould argue from the practice of ſects at large, and not from the deportment of individual men. For, whatever be the manners of a ſect in general, the truth of a propoſition addreſſed to the underſtanding, can never depend upon the number merely of the perſons whoſe conduct a belief in it is thought to influence.

But "to judge of doctrines by their effects," ſays our author, "is a practice warranted by "Scripture." * It has already been ſhewn, I preſume, that the paſſage to which he chiefly appeals in ſupport of this poſition, is totally inſufficient for his purpoſe. Not more pertinent are the other texts which he has quoted upon the ſub-

* Page 4.

ject.

ject. Let him firſt prove that he is placed in the ſame circumſtances with relation to reputed modern heretics, in which the Apoſtles found themſelves, as to the real ones of ancient times.

My ſilence concerning the doctrine of the atonement, is repreſented by Mr. Fuller* as the effect of a conſcious inability to refute his obſervations in its defence. Self-love would doubtleſs ſuggeſt to him, that it could not poſſibly be aſcribed to any other cauſe. He muſt allow me, however, to declare, that while I perceived in his publication many diſputable paſſages reſpecting this doctrine, I ſaw none which, from the novelty or the importance of them, demanded a reply. To animadvert upon thoſe paſſages, was, in truth, the leſs neceſſary, ſince the doctrine of the atonement has no place among the principles, the moral tendency of which I endeavoured to illuſtrate, and ſince the queſtion had been fully and ably diſcuſſed by former writers. †

I am charged by our author with an unfair ſtatement of his ideas concerning the vindictive character of God ‡. It is true, that he employed the word *vindictive* in a ſenſe which I

* Page 67.

† See eſpecially Sykes' Scripture Doctrine of Redemption, and Graham's Letters on the Atonement.

‡ Pages 68, 69.

had never before ſeen affixed to it: that quality which he would more properly have denominated *punitive*, he was pleaſed to call *vindictive* juſtice. Yet he ſtill left the Calviniſtic ſyſtem open to the charge of being, in the only juſt import of the expreſſion, a *vindictive* ſyſtem. I have "dreſſed it up" in no habits but it's own. Upon the queſtion, whether it be reconcileable with our conceptions of an infinitely powerful, wiſe and good Being to ſuppoſe, that from all eternity, and for no actual crime, he has doomed the larger part of mankind to endleſs miſery, Mr. Fuller has been profoundly and diſcreetly ſilent. Let him either acknowledge then, without any reſerve, that there is "a mixture of the "vindictive" in his religious creed, or let him relinquiſh the profeſſion and the name of Calviniſm. To juſtify his repreſentation of vindictive puniſhment, he has produced, indeed, quotations from the ſcriptures. But he has entered into no critical examination of the texts which he has cited. He has omitted to inquire, whether the tranſlation of them be correct, and whether they be in any degree applicable to the future puniſhment of individual perſons. To ſhew that this vindictive principle which he aſcribes to the Deity is "a glorious attribute," he refers us to the practice of human magiſtrates. He has forgotten, it would ſeem, that "the things which

"are

" are impoſſible with men are poſſible with " God;" he has forgotten that the divine government comprehends all events, extends through all ages, and will triumph over all obſtacles.

In no part of my diſcourſe have I conſidered the goodneſs of the creator as "merely beneficence, " undiſtinguiſhing beneficence." Never have I ſpoken of it as ſeparate from the direction of conſummate wiſdom; but have expreſsly repreſented " the juſtice, truth, and holineſs" of God as " modifications of his love *." Hence I believe that adequate puniſhment awaits the obſtinate tranſgreſſor, though under the divine adminiſtration ſuch puniſhment is deſigned to be corrective †. It by no means follows, that becauſe all the intelligent and moral offspring of the Deity will, at ſome future period, be rendered happy, the lot of the ſinner in the interval will not, therefore, be unſpeakably terrible and ſevere. The certainty of final puniſhment, and the aſſurance that it will be inflicted with the ſtricteſt equity, are, ſurely, motives of ſufficient power to induce us to "fly

* Diſcourſe, p. 11.

† The language of Paul, Rom. v. 15—is in my judgment highly favourable to this belief. To the ſerious inquirer, I would recommend a peruſal of Dr. Hartley's remarks upon the ſubject in Obſervations on Man, Vol. 11, pages 419—440, 1ſt edit.

" from the wrath to come;" and it is ſtill true, that " the Lord God, merciful and gracious, " will not, however, clear the guilty," while their guilt continues.

Were it my purpoſe to recriminate, I would inform Mr. Fuller, that " the God in whom he " profeſſes to believe is not," as appears to me, " the true God, or the God revealed in the " Bible *," and that the love to this tremendous Being for which he pleads, is agreeable to neither reaſon nor the ſcriptures. Religious truth, however, is little advanced by declarations ſuch as theſe; and it is not more promoted by this writer's favourite practice of citing texts, without any notice of the ſenſe in which they have been underſtood by many ſerious and learned perſons. Having in p. 77, gratified this propenſity, he obſerves concerning " the epitome of " goſpel truth", which he has ſtated, " it is de- " ſpoiled of all it's glory by the expoſitions of our " opponents." Why, then, has he not produced thoſe expoſitions, and ſhewn that they are falſe? This would have been a more honourable and manly conduct, than barely to aſſert that my remarks and quotations are " feeble and nuga- " tory." After all, what is the meaning of his obſervation? It is, that he has been accuſtomed

* Page 75.

to affix to ſome paſſages of ſcripture ideas very different from thoſe which are entertained by Unitarians. But how commonly do men peruſe the Bible, with ſo powerful a bias in favour of an hypotheſis, that all expoſitions repugnant to their prejudices are pronounced to be devoid of "every thing rich, intereſting, and endear-"ing!" It avails not that the interpretations in queſtion are perfectly agreeable to fair and ſober criticiſm. In the opinion of ſuch men, the true ſignification of a paſſage is that which has always been given to it by themſelves. The real ſenſe of the writer, as it may be collected from the context, or from the uſe of ſimilar phraſeology in correſponding places, is not an object of their attention.

It is a ſingular idea, that if God purſue the final happineſs of every individual, he muſt incur contempt*. Such is the triumph of *a vindictive* ſyſtem over the feelings of its champion! For myſelf, when I meditate upon this doctrine of final happineſs, my heart is filled with reverence and gratitude.—Not leſs ſtrange is the aſſertion, that true love to God cannot be natural to man†. This ſentiment is refuted when it is

* Page 73. † Page 77.

ſtated,

ſtated *. The paſſage † which our author quotes in ſupport of it is foreign to the purpoſe. Paul there ſpeaks of the love diſplayed by God to the human race in the Chriſtian revelation. He deſcribes thoſe primitive believers whom he addreſſes, as enjoying in the miraculous gifts imparted to them—gifts which, as is well known, are called the holy ſpirit or inſpiration—a perſonal aſſurance and proof of that benevolence.

To himſelf, nevertheleſs, and to Chriſtians of his own perſuaſion, Mr. Fuller applies many texts which related ſimply to the firſt profeſſors and teachers of our religion. A curious inſtance of this nature occurs in pages 79 and 80 of his reply, where he obſerves, that "if, according to Dr. "Kippis, it be extremely injudicious to repreſent "the Chriſtian revelation as of little value, unleſs "a particular ſyſtem be adopted, the apoſtle Paul "muſt have been verily guilty in ſuggeſting, that "the Galatian teachers, who only erred on the "doctrine of juſtification, had introduced *another* "*Goſpel*, and aimed at *perverting the Goſpel of* "*Chriſt*." Now, without inquiring whether the caſe of "Calviniſts and Socinians" perfectly

* That love to God is natural to wicked men, I no more admit than Mr. Fuller; and nothing which I have written authoriſes this abſurd concluſion. Compare p. 10, &c. of the Diſcourſe, with pages 13, 14, ſup:

† Rom. v. 5.

reſemble

reſemble that of Paul, and the judaizing zealots who infeſted the churches of Galatia, I will again remind our author that we admit not his claim to infallibility. When he can prove that he is an inſpired teacher of divine revelation—when he can ſhew that he is miraculouſly enabled to underſtand "all myſteries, and all knowledge," when he can exhibit "the ſigns of an apoſtle," when he can demonſtrate that he has the gift of diſcerning ſpirits, then, and not before, let him ſpeak concerning Unitarian Chriſtians, as Paul ſpoke concerning his opponents. Until he ſubſtantiate theſe pretenſions, I will entreat him, as he would paſs for a man of judgment and humility, as he wiſhes to diſplay the moral tendency of his religious principles, to refrain from language which not only is "extremely "injudicious," but highly unbecoming.

It is affirmed by Mr. Fuller, that he does not worſhip "a plurality of Deities *." I have no wiſh to diſcuſs at preſent the long agitated queſtion, whether Trinitarians can juſtly claim to be conſidered as believers in the proper unity of God. Undoubtedly, if, as the eſtabliſhed and popular faith aſſerts, there be three perſons in the godhead, there are three diſtinct, infinite minds; and what is this but *a plurality of Deities?*

* Page 80.

That

That the character of a being who is truly divine, is more eſtimable than that of one who is merely human, I ſhall not diſpute with our author. He might have ſaved himſelf the labour of any reaſoning on this head. Yet upon the inaccuracy of his ſtatement as it applies to the point at iſſue, to love to Chriſt *, I am conſtrained to animadvert. He has ſurely forgotten that while I profeſs to regard our Lord as "ſimply of the human race," I conſider him, nevertheleſs, as "greatly exalted above every former "prophet by divine communications and endowments." *The ſpirit was given to him without meaſure: It pleaſed the Father that in him all fulneſs ſhould dwell:* He poſſeſſed the faculty of working miracles upon what occaſions, and for what purpoſes, he choſe. Now, ſuch were the ends to which he actually devoted theſe communications and endowments, that his moral goodneſs was of the higheſt kind. He had in conſequence of his office and his gifts a ſuperior comprehenſion of ſoul; and whether his nature were thus ennobled by original or by derived excellence is, in a practical view, very immaterial.

If, however, we ought to love Chriſt upon the ground that he is ſtrictly God, let us again

* Pages 80—89.

inquire,

inquire, whether it be poſſible to love two diſtinct, infinite minds with all our hearts and all our ſouls. It will ſoon be ſhewn that vain is the attempt of Mr. Fuller to ſolve this difficulty, to reconcile this contradiction.

I cordially ſubſcribe to his remark, that "the "infinite amiableneſs of the moral character of "God as diſplayed particularly in the Goſpel, is "the primary reaſon why he is entitled to our "higheſt, pureſt love." Yet this motive reſolves itſelf, for the moſt part, into the principle of gratitude; for what is the moral character of the Supreme Being as exhibited in the Chriſtian diſpenſation, but a diſplay of infinite benevolence?

We love the Deity then in the firſt place, I repeat, as the fountain of our Chriſtian privileges; we next expreſs our love to Chriſt as the inſtrument of conveying to us thoſe privileges. And in the inquiry, whether this conduct be agreeable to the directions of the Scriptures, we are far more intereſted than in the queſtion, whether it be conformable to the Calviniſtic ſyſtem. Of that ſyſtem it is, in truth, characteriſtic, that it aſcribes our ſalvation principally, if not entirely, to Chriſt. *Him* it repreſents as the *primary author* rather than the *mean*; while the light in which it holds forth the Divinity is that of a ſtern, reſentful, inexorable ſovereign, devoting

voting from eternity the larger part of his rational creation to remedileſs miſery, nor willing that even a ſelect few ſhould be ſaved, without receiving "the rigid ſatisfaction, death for "death."

In entire harmony with theſe views of Almighty God, Mr. Fuller obſerves reſpecting Unitarian Chriſtians, "while they reject the "doctrine of atonement, I do not ſee how they "can feel themſelves obliged to him (Chriſt) for "the forgiveneſs of their ſins, or to any thing "which he has done and ſuffered for their hopes "of eternal life." Doubtleſs, for the pardon of our ſins, and for our hopes of everlaſting life we look primarily, as the New Teſtament inſtructs us, to the Supreme Being. In apoſtolic language we ſay: *God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet ſinners Chriſt died for us* (for our benefit): *God by Chriſt has forgiven us: Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a hope of life by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt**. Chriſt, therefore, we conſider as being, under God, our greateſt friend and benefactor.

That he *came into the world to ſave ſinners*, we receive as a true doctrine, and worthy of the

* Rom. v. 8. Eph. iv. 32. 1 Peter i. 3.

moſt

moſt joyful acceptation; though, attentive to ſcriptural phraſeology, we ſuppoſe not, like Mr. Fuller, that the expreſſion *came into the world*, has reference to a voluntary act and a pre-exiſtent ſtate*. Believing alſo, that it was in the choice of Jeſus to have uſed his miraculous powers either for his own ſecurity, preſervation, and aggrandizement, or for promoting the higheſt intereſts of mankind, we ardently love him, becauſe he yielded himſelf a willing victim to death even on a croſs, that he might atteſt and illuſtrate the truths which he delivered. Thus, the creed of the Unitarian lays a foundation for love to our ever-honoured maſter, inferior only to the love that we cheriſh and exerciſe toward the Father of the univerſe.

But to the Chriſtian Scriptures the appeal muſt after all be made; for Mr. Fuller ſays of his opponents, "their views of things will not ſuffer "them to ſpeak of Chriſt's *taking upon him fleſh* "*and blood*, of his *taking upon him not the na-* "*ture of angels, but the ſeed of Abraham*; of his "*being in the form of God, and yet taking upon*

* As rationally might we infer from John i. 9, that *every man* voluntarily comes into the world from a pre-exiſtent ſtate. See John vi. 14. The language of Chriſt in John xviii. 37, is deciſive on this point—"To this end *was I born*, and for this cauſe *came I into the world*."

"*him*

" *him the form of a ſervant, and being made in*
" *the likeneſs of men*; of our being *forgiven for*
" *his ſake*; or of *the promiſe of an eternal inhe-*
" *ritance being received by means of his death.*"—
It is true, the principles of Unitarian Chriſtians will not ſuffer them to cite notoriouſly falſe tranſlations of any texts whatever, or to judge of the doctrines which the New Teſtament teaches, " rather from the ſound of detached paſſages, " than from the ſignification and tenor of the " context."

Had our author inveſtigated the accuracy, inſtead of implicitly adopting the language of our received tranſlation, he would have known that a correcter verſion of Heb. ii. 14, is, " *ſince the chil-*
" *dren partook in common of fleſh and blood, he like-*
" *wiſe in the ſame manner ſhared in the ſame,*" he would have been ſenſible, that in the 16th verſe of this chapter, the words *the nature of* are confeſſedly the inſertion of the tranſlators, and that the whole of it would more properly have been rendered: " *he helpeth not angels, but helpeth a race of Abraham.** Again, he would have known that the phraſe *being in the form of God*, ſignifies the faculty of working miracles, which Jeſus conſtantly poſſeſſed, and that by his *emptying himſelf of it, and taking a ſervant's form*, is meant

* See Wakefield and Doddridge in loc.

that

that he choſe to paſs a life of ſelf-denial and humility, declining to employ his ſupernatural powers for his own advantage.* With regard to Eph. iv. 32. Mr. Fuller would have obſerved that the words, *for the ſake of*, are not in the original, and that in Heb. ix. 15, a truth is declared, which all Chriſtians thankfully admit, namely, that the death of Jeſus was an event neceſſary to the completion of the infinitely gracious purpoſe manifeſted in the Goſpel.

But there is one† of theſe texts which I ought not to diſmiſs without ſome farther notice. The popular doctrine of the *atonement*‡ ſo naturally dictates ſuch language as *for the ſake of Chriſt*, *through the merits of Chriſt*, that we are not ſurpriſed at hearing theſe and ſimilar expreſſions

* See Mr. Lindſey's Sequel to his Apology, pages 272—277.

† Eph. iv. 32.

‡ The word *atonement* occurs but once in our tranſlation of the New Teſtament. It is found in Rom. v. 11, where it ought to have been rendered *reconciliation*; *the reconciliation*, that is, *of man to God*. Compare the 10th and 11th verſes with 2 Cor. v. 18, 21. This doctrine of the atonement, and others of the ſame claſs are often repreſented as the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity, and "under the ſanction of that name," as it has been well obſerved, "eſcape the examination they have ſo much "reaſon to fear."—Mr. Tyrwhitt's Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection of the Dead by the man Chriſt Jeſus, p. 19.

from

from perſons by whom this doctrine is embraced. We may juſtly infer, then, that did the Scriptures teach it, there would frequently be found in them ſuch correſponding phraſes. What, however, is the fact? The text before us is the only place even in the Engliſh teſtament, which ſpeaks of our ſins being pardoned *for the ſake of* Chriſt. And to every competent judge, whatever be his religious denomination, it is well known that the words *for the ſake of*, are a moſt unjuſtifiable addition of the tranſlators.* It ought to have been known to Mr. Fuller. He would thus have been preſerved from the diſgrace of quoting, as the language of the Scriptures, what is evidently the language only of the perſons by whom they were tranſlated. It the more became him to have procured ſome information upon this ſubject, as he freely charges Socinian writers with a want of veneration for the ſacred volume. Let the reader now determine, whether greater reverence be paid to it by them or by Mr. Fuller. Yet our author diſclaims that veneration for theſe records of our faith, which conſiſts in "a dread of examining them," and in "a blind acquieſcence in the errors of

* The true rendering is, *as God, in* or by *Chriſt*, has forgiven you, words which convey aſſuredly a very different idea from that of a vicarious puniſhment, "an "atoning ſacrifice."

"tranſla-

"tranſlators!" I leave him to reconcile his profeſſions with his conduct. It is plain, that to ſupport the ſentiments of which he is the advocate, he avails himſelf of falſe tranſlations of the Scriptures, tranſlations which are received in general without inquiry, and appealed to without a bluſh.

"We believe," ſays this writer, "on the "firſt of all authority, that *Chriſt and the Father* "*are ſo one*, that *he who hath ſeen him hath ſeen* "*the Father*, and that *he who honoureth him*, in "ſo doing, *honoureth the Father*." To this firſt and higheſt authority I ſubmit equally with Mr. Fuller, and perſuade myſelf that I reverence the words of Chriſt, when I receive them as they are explained and interpreted by Chriſt. *I and my Father*, he declares *, *are one*; and in another place †, he thus addreſſes the Deity on the behalf of his diſciples; "neither pray I for them "alone, (the Apoſtles) but for them alſo which "ſhall believe on me through their word, that "*they all may be one as thou Father art in me and I* "*in thee, that they alſo may be one in us.*" To Philip he remarks, *he that hath ſeen me hath ſeen the Father* ‡; but in the very next verſe he illuſtrates the remark by an appeal to the divine

* John x. 30. † John xvii. 20, 21.

‡ John xiv. 9.

powers that were communicated to him. Again, he requires* all men to *honour him even as they honour the Father*. Not to obſerve, however, that the word *as* by no means denotes a perfect equality, which is ſufficiently proved by the uſe of it in Matt. v. 48, Jeſus himſelf informs us, let it be remembered, that ſuch honour is his due, becauſe the Father hath *committed* to him all judgment. He ſpeaks likewiſe of the Father as having *ſent* him. Theſe paſſages clearly expreſs a diſtinction between the Father and the Son, between original and derived authority, between the being who ſends, and him who is delegated. They are, therefore, totally at variance with the opinions, and irrelative to the purpoſe, of our author.

But I am accuſed by him of a wiſh to confound the reaſons with the expreſſions of love to Chriſt. So far is this from being the fact, that having diſtinctly examined into the grounds of this affection, and having ſtated them to be the moral character and the important office of Jeſus, I next inquire in what the principle conſiſts. It is Mr. Fuller, then, and not his opponent, whoſe remarks are calculated to "perplex the ſubject." He too it is who in his letters† repreſents acknowledgments of the

* John v. 22, 23. † Page 211, 2d edit.

divine

divine dignity and excellency of Chriſt as ſcriptural expreſſions of love to "the Apoſtle and "High Prieſt of our profeſſion." To ſupport this repreſentation, he, in his uſual method, quotes many texts, of which the erroneous tranſlation has repeatedly been expoſed, and the meaning of which he diſdains to criticiſe*.

"I do not recollect †," he declares, "having "advanced any thing in my Letters on the fear "of God." His ſilence, however, was certainly no reaſon why the ſubject ſhould be unnoticed by his opponent; and this circumſtance is a ſufficient proof, that to animadvert upon his performance was not, as he is willing to believe, the primary end of my diſcourſe. Upon the definition, or rather the repreſentation, which I have given of the fear of God, he remarks ‡: "The "moral excellence of the Deity, as the object "of fear, enters not into it; neither is there "any thing of a moral nature included in it. "Without taking upon me to define this hea-"venly virtue, I may obſerve, that a holy dread "of offending God, or of incurring his diſ-"pleaſure, enters into it's eſſence." Now it happens, that I alſo have ſaid, "it is expreſſed "by a pious concern never to offend: it is, in

* Letters, page 216. † Page 89.
‡ Page 90.

" the language of a ſacred writer, to fear the " Lord and his goodneſs, &c.*" With what colour of truth, then, has Mr. Fuller alledged, that " nothing of a moral nature is included in " my definition?"

That my obſervations upon confidence in the Deity are unſcriptural, our author has not attempted to demonſtrate. Yet he ſays † " in this, " as in moſt other of his diſquiſitions, Mr. " Kentiſh appears to me to forget that he is a " ſinner." The opinion of Mr. Fuller on this point is of no importance to the argument. I am deſirous of learning from a different quarter my condition and my duty. It becomes us, undoubtedly, not to think of ourſelves more highly than we ought to think; it becomes us to avoid the language of real pride, of oſtentatious humility, and of raſh and cenſorious judgment. The preſent queſtion, however, is, whether my repreſentation of devout truſt be agreeable, not to the ſentiments of this writer, but to the doctrine of the Scriptures.

Since he quotes texts merely from the Engliſh verſion of the Bible, and collects their meaning from their ſound, it is not wonderful that he miſapprehends the nature of *truſt in Chriſt*. The truth is, none of the paſſages which he has ad-

* Diſcourſe, p. 19. † Page 91.

duced,

duced, deſcribe it as an exerciſe diſtinct from a practical belief in the Chriſtian revelation. In Rom. xv. 12, the Apoſtle cites the language of Iſaiah *, as expreſſive of the hope which the heathens would maintain in the name, or diſpenſation, of Chriſt, on their converſion to Chriſtianity. His declaration in Eph. i. 12, is upon the ſame topic, and to the ſame effect †; and he muſt, indeed, be a novice in the ſtudy of the Scriptures, who needs to be imformed, that the word *Chriſt* frequently ſignifies, in the New Teſtament, the doctrine, or the goſpel, of Chriſt ‡.—Another text upon which much ſtreſs appears to be laid by Mr. Fuller is 2 Tim. i. 12. Granting that it refers to Chriſt, and not to God, I muſt ſtill conſider two words in the laſt clauſe of it as erroneouſly tranſlated. They ſhould have been rendered, I think, *what has been committed unto me*, inſtead of " what I have committed unto him." *What has been committed unto me*, or *the depoſit that I have received*, means the miniſtry of the Goſpel, which had been given in truſt to the

* Iſaiah xi. 10. † Locke in loc.

‡ Examples of this phraſeology continually occur. See Taylor on the Romans, p. 56. 2d edit. To the inſtances which are there produced ſeveral may be added; among others, Phil. iv. 13. Heb. xiii. 8, and the paſſage under conſideration (Eph. i. 12.)

Apoſtle. This venerable preacher foreſeeing that he was ſoon to ſuffer martyrdom for his religious faith, nobly avows his belief in Chriſtianity, and expreſſes a firm perſuaſion, that the maſter whom he ſerved, would enable him to preſerve ſecure, the ſacred charge with which he had been honoured. There is the greater reaſon to regard this as a correct tranſlation of the words, ſince Paul had ſpoken juſt before of his Chriſtian miniſtry, ſince the whole paſſage becomes thus more pertinent and connected, and ſince it is ſanctioned by ſimilar language in theſe epiſtles to his beloved convert, and in different parts of his writings *. With no propriety, then, are the above texts brought forward by our author; and he might well have ſpared his lamentation over "the inſufficiency of the ground "upon which we build our hopes. †" It is not for him to pronounce this deciſion. When he ſays, "Uncharitable and uncandid as they "conſider me, I could water theſe pages with "tears for them: my heart's deſire and prayer to "God is that they may be ſaved," I am unable to reconcile his compaſſionate effuſions with the general ſtrain of his performance. There are

* See 2 Tim. i. 1. 14. ii. 12. 2 Cor. iii. 6. iv. 1. 7. 1 Theſſ. ii. 4.

† Page 92.

men

men who preſent " a prayer in the ſpirit of an " indictment *."

" Private devotion," he tells us truly, " is a " matter that cannot come under public cogni- " zance." He aſſerts, notwithſtanding, that " perſons when they embrace the ſyſtem of So- " cinians, though they have previouſly been in " the habit of praying to God, yet are frequently " known, at that time, entirely to give it up †." Whence did he gain this information? Has he entered into the cloſets of thoſe perſons? Doth he ſee them in ſecret? Will he arrogate omniſcience not leſs than infallibility?—But he is pleaſed to qualify the charge: he adds, " or if " they practiſe it, it is by drawing up a written " compoſition, and reading it to the Almighty." Will he inſinuate, then, that the ſpirit of pure and fervent piety cannot breathe in " a written " compoſition?" Forgetting that the Pſalms of David were written compoſitions, he inſinuates it without heſitation and without ſhame. This decent accuſation he advanced in his Letters ‡; he advanced it with no evidence for it's ſupport; and in his Reply, it is not only repeated, but

* Mr. Hall's Apology for the Freedom of the Preſs. Pref. page xv.

† Pages 92, 93. See likewiſe page 63.

‡ Page 109.

even applied to a compoſition, which he acknowledges that he has never read. The *Addreſs to the Deity* by Mrs. Barbauld he has "not ſeen:" it's elegance he doubts not; its devotion he calls in queſtion: "Sure he is, that ſuch things are at "a great remove from thoſe prayers and ſuppli- "cations which abounded amongſt the primitive "Chriſtians, and which have abounded among "ſerious Chriſtians of every age." So much for what Mr. Fuller has alledged to "the diſadvan- "tage of Socinian piety," or rather to the manifeſt diſadvantage of his own ingenuouſneſs, equity, and candour!—I proceed to the examination of his remarks upon another ſubject.

The innocence of involuntary error he profeſſes to have admitted*. He is "inclined to think, "that the mere holding of an opinion, con- "ſidered abſtractedly from the ſtate of mind of "him that holds it, has in it neither good nor "evil." The conceſſion is, indeed, large and generous! But he appears, at the ſame time, to confound the ideas of voluntary and involuntary error. Perhaps it is more than poſſible, that a man who diligently employs the means of information which are put into his hands, who is pious and benevolent in his diſpoſition, and exemplary in his life, may fall, nevertheleſs, into miſtakes

* Pages 95, 96

concerning

concerning religious doctrine. Now it would be proper, I conceive, to ſtile theſe involuntary miſtakes. As far as human beings can decide, they are falſe concluſions of the underſtanding, and not deviations of the will.

Such errors, however, this writer ſeems to conſider as voluntary and criminal. He intimates, that "there are truths which from the "nature of them cannot be rejected without an "evil bias of heart*." Of this kind, doubtleſs, are, in his eſtimation, the ſentiments which he regards as the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel. I repeat, then, the queſtion, "Who requires "to be informed, that men of acknowledged, "and it ſhould ſeem of equal virtue, have yet "profeſſed the moſt contradictory notions upon "ſubjects of religion?" In aid of this queſtion, and in contraſt to our author's obſervations, I am happy to produce the following reflections of an able defender of revelation:—"Newton and "Locke," remarks Biſhop Watſon, "were "eſteemed Socinians, Lardner was an avowed "one; Clarke and Whiſton were declared "Arians; Bull and Waterland were profeſſed "Athanaſians. Who will take upon him to "ſay, that theſe men were not equal to each "other in probity and ſcriptural knowledge? "And if that be admitted, ſurely we ought to

* Letters, page 176.

" learn no other leſſon from the diverſity of their " opinions, except that of perfect moderation, " and good will towards all thoſe who happen to " differ from ourſelves, &c." *

But we are informed by Mr. Fuller, that to an evil bias of heart errors are attributed in the Scriptures †. Allowing, for the ſake of argument, that ſuch is the fact, ſtill before it can have any pertinent application, he muſt prove, that he is an infallible judge of religious doctrine, an inſpired teacher of divine truth. He muſt ſhew that he is in circumſtances ſimilar to thoſe of our Lord and the Apoſtles, of " Paul and " Peter," of " John and Jude ‡." It is evident, nevertheleſs, that one of theſe Apoſtles eſteemed ſome errors in religion as perfectly innocent ‖; and it is farther remarkable, that this ſame writer ſtrongly condemns the perſons who " judge" their brethren, and " ſet at nought" their brethren.

A reply is importunately ſolicited by Mr. Fuller to the queſtion: " Suppoſing that I am in " an error in thinking amiſs of my fellow- " creatures, why ſhould it not be as innocent as

* Catalogue of Books page 39, at the end of Collection of Theological Tracts.

† Page 97.

‡ Page 98.

‖ See Rom. xiv. xv.

" thinking

" thinking amiſs of Chriſt?" It were ungenerous to withhold from him information of which he thus acknowledges himſelf to be in want. I ſhould have imagined, however, that no perſon could be unacquainted with the plain diſtinction exiſting in the caſe which he has ſtated. The anſwer is, if I think amiſs of my fellow-creatures, if I judge them for the concluſions which they have deduced from a ſerious peruſal of the Scriptures, if I arrogate infallibility to myſelf, and deny ſincerity to others, I violate the law of Chriſtian humility and love; I invade the province of him to whom all hearts are open, and all deſires known. On the other hand, if I think amiſs of Chriſt, if I am in an error, that is, reſpecting his perſon, at the ſame time that I receive his credentials, venerate his character, obey his laws, imbibe his ſpirit—a merciful and righteous God will aſſuredly make due allowance for this my miſtake; and it ought not to be imputed to me as a crime by any of my fellow men.

While our author diſclaims an inclination to occupy the chair of infallibility, he really writes upon the ſubject of error like a man who is conſcious of being divinely inſpired with a knowledge of the truth. And with a perſon who views himſelf in this light, and who alſo cites paſſages of Scripture, without regard to their proper ſcope

and application, I undoubtedly contend, ſo far, upon diſadvantageous, becauſe upon unequal ground. It is my hope that I cordially prize what I embrace as the genuine doctrines of revelation. But may I ever recollect that I am a fallible interpreter of the ſacred volume! I will not aſſimilate myſelf to the Apoſtle of the Gentiles, or to " my Lord and maſter:" I am ſenſible, that, until the Scriptures are more diligently read, more generally and thoroughly underſtood, diverſity of ſentiment upon religious topics muſt continue to exiſt: I am perſuaded, that it is at leaſt poſſible, I may in ſome inſtances be miſtaken, and that knowledge and virtue are not confined to the denomination under which I rank. Nothing, therefore, which Mr. Fuller has advanced, will prevent me from looking with perfect ſatisfaction, complacency, and benevolence, upon the man whoſe theological opinions differ from mine, provided I have cauſe to think him pious and ſincere: and I ſhall always eſteem it as a ſtrong objection againſt this writer's creed, that it has a tendency to dictate the language: " Stand by " thyſelf, for I am holier than thou."

I obſerved in my diſcourſe,* that " with leſs " reſtraint than is exerciſed by ſome of their bre- " thren, Unitarian Chriſtians enter into the

* Page 32.

" world,

" world, and indulge in its amuſements." From the commentary * of our author upon this ſentence, let the reader judge of the credit which is due to him, when he profeſſes to quote any imagined conceſſions of his opponents. His aim is to deſcribe me as owning, as juſtifying, and even as applauding a conformity to the world in general; whereas it is plain, that I ſpeak of ſuch conformity in a comparative point of view, and remark, that, in a certain degree, it is entirely conſiſtent with the precepts and the ſpirit of the Goſpel. That ſuch is my meaning he who peruſes the paragraph throughout will inſtantly perceive: and he will farther be ſenſible that this writer's ſtatement of my language is a groſs miſrepreſentation. Could Mr. Fuller, indeed, be ignorant that I had before pleaded for " a ſerioufneſs of temper which is as " diſtant from levity, as it is from rigour of man- " ners?" † It is allowed by himſelf, that in ſome enjoyments we may lawfully partake; and where have I denied that our indulgence in the amuſements of the world, as well as our participation in its enjoyments, ought to be reſtrained by an habitual ſenſe of the brevity and uncertainty of earthly pleaſures? On a calm review of what has here fallen from his pen, he will, ſurely, bluſh for his language and his conduct. They are,

* Pages 103—105. † Diſcourſe, p. 21.

without

without doubt, equally unbecoming the character of the "Chriſtian miniſter," and that of the diſintereſted votary of truth.

There are perſons who, becauſe they totally abſtain from recreations, ſuppoſe that they avoid a conformity to the world. Yet they exhibit at the ſame time, an unbounded attachment to wealth, an inſatiable thirſt for gain, or perhaps an ardent deſire of popularity and diſtinction. It ſeems to be forgotten by them, that theſe qualities are likewiſe proofs of a worldly ſpirit, proofs not leſs clear and deciſive than the moſt immoderate love of pleaſure and diſſipation. I have witneſſed, indeed, the frequency of ſuch examples among men who ſternly frown even upon a ſober indulgence in amuſements.

In reply to the ſecond head of my diſcourſe, our author has aſſerted * that I am "obliged to "have recourſe to common principles as the "ſprings of joy and conſolation," which, he continues, is "a ſufficient proof that thoſe which "are peculiar to my ſcheme as a Socinian, were "altogether unadapted to my purpoſe." It would have been well, if, before he made this aſſertion, he had actually ſhewn, that of the texts which I have cited, none are peculiar to my ſcheme. I adverted to Heb. ii. 17; "but let any perſon conſult the paſſage," ſays this writer, "and he

* Page 106.

"will

" will find, that he who was in all things made
" like unto his brethren, *took not on him the na-*
" *ture of angels, but the ſeed of Abraham*; that is,
" he exiſted prior to his being a man, and was
" voluntary in chuſing to aſſume the human,
" rather than the angelic, nature." Such, doubtleſs, is the language of our tranſlators, and ſuch the comment of Mr. Fuller. It has already been remarked, that the former is falſe, and that the other is, in conſequence, fanciful and arbitrary. I heartily ſubſcribe, nevertheleſs, to the obſervation, that " by culling ſingle ſentences, without
" taking their connection, we may prove any
" thing we pleaſe;" and I have only to wiſh that the replier had himſelf been attentive to this juſt and important maxim. Certainly, " to cull
" ſingle ſentences, without taking their connection," and I may add, to quote tranſlations which are manifeſtly erroneous, is to " abuſe the Scriptures, rather than interpret them." The wonder is, that after the ſpecimens which have been produced of Mr. Fuller's practice on theſe heads, we ſhould perceive him gravely advancing this poſition. He intimates, however, that I have diſregarded it in the caſe of the above text; whereas it is evident, that according to the proper verſion of the paſſage in diſpute, there is no oppoſition of ſentiment between the former and the laſt part of it, but that the whole ſtates the ſimple

ſimple humanity of Chriſt, and aſſigns a reaſon for this fact.

That the reſurrection of Jeſus is affirmed to have been the reſurrection of a mere man, every perſon who carefully regards the ſcope of the Apoſtle's argument in 1 Cor. xv. 21, &c. will inſtantly diſcern. Never was concluſion more ſtrictly and legitimately contained in the premiſes whence it is deduced. The ſacred writer reaſons from an exact ſimilarity of nature in Adam and in Chriſt;* and it cannot be proved that he uſes the term *man* in a ſenſe different from that which is univerſally and juſtly given to it in common language.

But while Mr. Fuller is deficient in proof, he is extremely liberal in aſſertions. "I muſt ſay," he declares, ſpeaking of thoſe whom he denominates Socinians, "that I never ſaw any thing in any of "their writings that appeared to me to bear any "tolerable reſemblance to the joy of the Goſpel." Now his opinion, I repeat, is of no importance. By his own confeſſion, his acquaintance with the practical writings of Socinians is limited and ſuperficial. It is poſſible, that had he read the pieces to which I referred him, he might have diſcovered cauſe to form a more favourable judg-

* Mr. Tyrwhitt's Diſcourſe on the Reſurrection, &c.

ment.

ment. In the addreſs to the Deity, by Mrs. Barbauld, a compoſition upon the devotional ſpirit of which, none of his readers can forget that he has ventured to deliver his ſentiments, while he acknowledges that he has not ſeen it, he might have found ſomething of religious, of Chriſtian joy.

It is little wonderful, however, that " nothing " in the writings of Socinians bears any tolerable " reſemblance to the joy of the Goſpel :" if, as our author inſinuates, * Socinians be " themſelves ſtrangers to the ſacred joys of religion," an inſinuation which, in point of modeſty, rivals his aſſumption, that no joy is evangelic, excepting what the Calviniſt indulges. " Evangelical " joy :" we are charged by him with deſpiſing as enthuſiaſtic; in ſupport of which accuſation he adduces the ſolitary inſtance of ſome anonymous writer in a literary journal. But " ſuch examples," he adds, " may be multiplied without " end." May they, indeed, be thus indefinitely multiplied? Then ſurely from this immenſe maſs of materials, a better ſpecimen might have been ſelected than the language of an unknown author.

Having obſerved in the diſcourſe, † that Unitarian Chriſtians claim to embrace and avow no

* Page 107 † Page 36.

other

other doctrine, than what Jesus and his Apostles taught, I proceeded to remark that if it be less successful now than when it was originally delivered, the fact is to be explained by the prevalence of human corruptions. To every reflecting and candid person it must undoubtedly have been obvious, that by *human corruptions* I meant human corruptions of religion. Had I intended to say that the vices of mankind obstruct the moral efficacy of what I consider as the pure Christian doctrine, the term human *corruption* would naturally have been preferred. My meaning, nevertheless, is most strangely misrepresented by Mr. Fuller, who asks, "Is it a fact, then, that men "are more corrupt amongst Socinians, than "in the congregations where the doctrine of "atonement through the blood of Christ, is "taught and believed?" * So indeed, by a practice not uncommon to him, he is desirous of insinuating, so he wishes to describe me as conceding, and so he is willing that his readers should infer.

Upon the question, whether the Scriptures authorise us to reject every pretence to sudden conversion, the negative is maintained by our author. He appeals to "the repentance of Zac-"cheus, of the thief upon the cross, of the Jews

* Page 108.

"under

" under Peter's ſermon, of the jailor and his " houſehold, and of many others of whom there is " an account in the Acts of the Apoſtles." * Let theſe caſes, however, be fairly examined, and they will be found inſufficient to ſuſtain the concluſion of Mr. Fuller.

The character of Zaccheus † is, in my judgment, generally miſapprehended. As the chief of the tax-gatherers employed by the Roman government, he muſt have been exceedingly obnoxious to the Jewiſh nation. When Jeſus, therefore, went into the houſe of this perſon, the people naturally murmured, ſaying, " he was " gone to be a gueſt with a man that is a ſinner," a term which is often equivalent to the word heathen. And ſuch is all the evidence we have of his former vice—the partial and ſuſpicious declaration of the Jews. That he was opulent is true. His office, even conſcientiouſly diſcharged, could not fail to be lucrative. But in proof of his diſintereſted temper, he offered to give " the half of his goods to the poor, and *if* " he had taken any thing from any man by falſe " accuſation, to reſtore him four-fold." This being his diſpoſition, our Lord pronounced him fit to become a member of the ſpiritual kingdom which he was now eſtabliſhing. Upon the whole,

* Page 109. † Luke xix. 1—11.

Zaccheus

Zaccheus can with no propriety be regarded as an example of ſudden repentance and converſion.*

Not with more reaſon, I conceive, is the caſe of the thief upon the croſs † produced as an inſtance of late, yet effectual penitence. Let it firſt be ſhewn that this man had been a common robber or aſſaſſin. It is the opinion of writers whoſe opinions are entitled to peculiar reſpect, that he was crucified for a political offence. ‡ Now hiſtory proves that men whom Mr. Fuller will allow to have been ſerious Chriſtians, have been convicted and executed, nevertheleſs, as criminals of ſtate. From this example, therefore, it were precarious and unſafe to deduce the doctrine of inſtantaneous converſion. §

* See Grot. in loc. Dr. S. Clarke's Paraphraſe, and Lardner's Works, vol. i. pages 219, 220, new edit.

† Luke xxiii. 39—43.

‡ Biſhop Pearce's Commentary, and Dr. Jortin's Sermons. Vol. III. No. iv.

§ " 'Tis probable," ſays Dr. S. Clarke, (Note in Paraphraſe on Luke xxiii. 42.) " from the admonition " mentioned in the two foregoing verſes, that this rob- " ber had been brought to ſerious conſideration and true " repentance ſome time before he came to execution. " But however that be, *'tis certain his believing in Chriſt* " *at this firſt opportunity, bears no ſimilitude to the late re-* " *pentance of Chriſtians, who have believed and diſobey-* " *ed him all their lives.*"

But

But we are referred to the immediate efficacy of Peter's addreſs to the Jews, * upon many of his hearers. Of that efficacy, however, what was the nature and the degree? The diſcourſe of the Apoſtle perſuaded a conſiderable number of his countrymen to accept the privileges of the Goſpel. In this ſenſe only can it be ſaid that they were converted. It was yet to be ſeen whether they would improve their new advantages. Nothing which the hiſtorian has recorded implies that they were changed at once from ſin to holineſs. Similar was the caſe of the jailor and his houſehold, † and of other heathen and jewiſh converts to Chriſtianity.

It is aſked by our author, "What end has Mr. "Kentiſh to anſwer, by his objecting to ſudden "converſion, and repreſenting it as a work of "time and labour?" What end! No other than to proteſt againſt a doctrine which I conſider as irrational, as unſcriptural, as highly dangerous. If converſion be truly ſtiled by Mr. Fuller, "a "change of diſpoſition and of life;" if it be ſomething in which this object is accompliſhed, then, from the very nature of habits and of character, ſuch a change muſt be gradually effected. But of a ſudden alteration in the habits and the character, no inſtance can be produced from the

* Acts ii. 37—42. † Acts xvi. 25—35.

Scriptures; and to aſſert that religious principle may be inſtantaneouſly acquired, is to flatter and encourage the abandoned ſinner. * The teachers of the Unitarian faith ſooth not the conſcience with ſuch deluſive hopes. For the practical efficacy of their doctrine, however, they can appeal to many bright examples of Chriſtian virtue among thoſe by whom it is received; examples not fewer, in proportion to the number of its profeſſors, than Calviniſm can boaſt.

But as the moral tendency and the practical influence of our reſpective ſyſtems, form the main queſtion in diſpute between Mr. Fuller and myſelf, let me here be permitted to offer ſome remarks upon the general argument, in addition to thoſe which I have already taken occaſion to deliver.

Concerning the validity of our author's principle, that from the character of a ſect is to be inferred the truth or the falſehood of its leading tenets, I have in the courſe of theſe pages ſtated

* "I lay very little ſtreſs upon what ſome divines call "converſions; I have ſeen ſo many inſtances of their "coming to nothing, or that their converts have only "been converted from the ſins of men to the ſins of devils; "from drunkenneſs and debauchery to ſpiritual pride, "bitterneſs and uncharitableneſs: and this I cannot call "a ſaving change.—*Converſion is a work of time.*" Orton's Letters to a young Clergyman, pages 65, 66.

my

my opinion. I have evinced alſo the moral tendency of the Unitarian doctrine, as well by an examination into the nature of that doctrine, as by a reference to the conduct of the body of its profeſſors. Perhaps I have made it farther appear, that Mr. Fuller is here incompetent to pronounce a fair deciſion. I will now add, that he has not, in the mean time, ſufficiently conſidered whether Calviniſm can with reaſon exult in the moral tendency of its principles.

What are the diſtinguiſhing articles of its creed? That man has naturally no power to do the will of God; that the Deity commands where he has not given the faculty of obeying; that all the human race are, from the womb, and previouſly to the commiſſion of any actual crime, ſubject to God's wrath and curſe, are *liable to all the miſeries in this life, to death itſelf, and to the pains of Hell for ever*; that they are *tainted with ſin, not ſlightly and ſuperficially*, but *radically and to the very core*; that God hath, out of his mere good pleaſure, from all eternity, elected ſome to everlaſting life; that theſe few, however, are exempted from eternal wretchedneſs, only in conſequence of a full ſatisfaction made by an infinite and perfectly innocent Being to Almighty Juſtice, while the reſt are created merely to ſhew forth the divine glory in their future and endleſs torments; that as man is con-

demned

demned for imputed ſin, ſo he is ſaved (if ſaved) by imputed righteouſneſs; that not even ſincerity and virtue will avail to preſerve from final ruin him who cannot believe theſe doctrines; and that it is poſſible, on the other hand, for a hardened tranſgreſſor inſtantly and ſuddenly to become a ſaint.

I aſk, now, every impartial perſon, what is the natural tendency of ſuch principles as theſe? To produce a fatal ſecurity in ſome men, and in others a ſcarcely leſs fatal deſpair; to harraſs and contract the ſoul; to fill it with the moſt painful and diſtreſſing views of God, of mankind; to nouriſh uncharitableneſs and ſpiritual pride; and to cauſe the great duties of juſtice, temperance, and love, to be conſidered as objects of ſecondary moment.

Far, indeed, am I from believing that ſuch are univerſally the effects of this ſyſtem. It ſeldom or ever happens that a ſect retains not principles of ſufficient efficacy to counteract the influence of noxious doctrines. Few are the poiſons againſt which the wiſdom and goodneſs of Providence furniſh us not with antidotes. I am happy in bearing witneſs, from perſonal intercourſe and obſervation, to the exemplary virtue of many profeſſors and teachers of the Calviniſtic faith. But that the doctrine operates in the manner which I have deſcribed upon ſeveral who embrace it, I

have

I have alſo poſſeſſed opportunities of remarking: nor, as a body, I conceive, can they juſtly make pretenſions to a ſuperiority in moral and Chriſtian attainments.

The articles of the Church of England are undoubtedly Calviniſtic; its faith is Trinitarian. And granting, as I cheerfully grant, that there are many illuſtrious patterns of goodneſs among the clergy and the members of this church, ſtill it will hardly be contended by Mr. Fuller, that the greater number of them "do more than "others." Neither, again, have I diſcovered that the perſons who compoſe the bulk of the Calviniſtic ſocieties among Diſſenters, are ſtricter non-conformiſts to the world, to its faſhions, its pleaſures, its gainful purſuits, than Unitarian Chriſtians. Some few of them, it is true, there are, who more ſparingly indulge in the amuſements of life; but that the reſtraint which they here exerciſe is itſelf a proof of Chriſtian perfection, remains to be demonſtrated. There is, beſide, no reaſon to conclude that theſe congregations are more attentive to the duties of ſocial and perſonal religion.

Yet it will perhaps be ſaid, that for the practical efficacy of the Calviniſtic doctrine, we ſhould appeal, not to the majority of the miniſters and the votaries of the eſtabliſhment, but to thoſe of them alone whoſe ſentiments and whoſe diſ-

courſes are *evangelical.* I queſtion not, indeed, that among this denomination of men ſome valuable individuals may be found. It has been proved, however, by many recent facts, it has eſpecially appeared from the conduct and the writings of a well-known ſenator, that a zeal for *the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel*, is not inconſiſtent with a ſeeming diſregard in public life, to the equitable, benevolent, generous, and pacific ſpirit of Chriſtianity.

Add to which, there are among the profeſſors of Calviniſm in general, many who poſſeſs "a "ſtrong deluſion" in reſpect to the genius and deſign of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, who truſting in themſelves that they are righteous, deſpiſe others, who are utterly averſe from receiving inſtruction in the moral duties of the Goſpel, and who by their auſterity and bitterneſs, drive the riſing generation to infidelity and licentiouſneſs. Hence, as a body, it might rather become them to take heed unto their own ways, than to deſcant upon the immoral tendency of Unitarian principles.

I am accuſed by Mr. Fuller * of conduct which is "evaſive, and unworthy of a candid reaſoner," becauſe I have choſen to deliver my own ſentiments upon veneration for the Scriptures, in my

* Page 113.

own

own language. Yet however he may be pleaſed with "the ground or datum" which he preſcribes of the argument, I ſhall claim and exerciſe the privilege of judging, in this inſtance, for myſelf. The fact is, my deſcription of veneration for the ſacred volume not merely includes the datum of our author, but comprehends other proofs of reverence for it, of which *he* has been forgetful.

If this writer is to be credited, I have given ſuch "a definition of veneration for the Scrip-"tures, as leaves out the ideas of inſpiration and "infallibility." * Mark the candour and fairneſs of the charge. Of the Apoſtles and Evangeliſts I have expreſsly ſpoken, as "men who faithfully "teach that word of God, with a knowledge of "which they were furniſhed by their maſter, "and by miraculous communications ſubſequent "to his aſcenſion." † With what ſhadow of juſtice then is it ſaid, that while I uſe the term inſpiration, it is yet manifeſt that I conſider the Apoſtles in no other light than honeſt, well informed hiſtorians?

There is, at the ſame time, a very obvious diſtinction between the character of the Apoſtles as preachers of Chriſtianity, and as the memorialiſts of facts. This diſtinction I have made;

* Page 111. † Diſcourſe, p. 39.

and for making it I have the authority of men *, whoſe learning was eminent, and whoſe attachment to eſtabliſhed and popular doctrines, is not to be called in queſtion.

But it is affirmed, that I have given only my *opinion* of the inſpiration of the Scriptures, and of the veneration which is due to them †. It is indeed true; yet I have endeavoured to collect that opinion from a ſerious and diſpaſſionate peruſal of the ſacred writings. I have not contented myſelf, like Mr. Fuller, with undefined expreſſions; and in a diſcourſe, of which the primary object was illuſtration, and upon a ſubject which has ſo often been inveſtigated, I was not obliged to accompany our author while he barely enumerated texts, without any view to their phraſeology and connection.

He would have been more laudably employed, had he ſubſtituted correct and ſolid reaſoning for unfounded accuſation. Why did not he attempt to controvert the definition which I have given of reverence for the Scriptures? It is remarkable, that he diſclaims the pretended reſpect for them which I was led to cenſure, and ſome fla-

* I refer in particular to the late J. Michaelis (See Marſh's Tranſlation of his Introduction to the New Teſtament, Vol. I. pages 72—75. 96, 97), and Archbiſhop Tillotſon (See his works, Vol. III. 448, 449.)

† Page 113.

grant

grant inſtances of which are furniſhed both by his Letters and his Reply.

Divine Providence has ordained, that a knowledge of the facts and doctrines which conſtitute the Chriſtian revelation, ſhould be handed down to us in writing. Since, however, the languages in which the Scriptures were compoſed have ceaſed, in effect, to be living languages, no man who undertakes to tranſlate or to explain theſe books, can juſtly affirm that he has diſcovered, in all caſes, their genuine ſignification. For being ſubject to ignorance and prejudice, he may conſider that as the natural and plain ſenſe of a paſſage, which really was the moſt remote from the mind of the writer or the ſpeaker. The diligent, pious, and honeſt exerciſe of ſuch faculties and learning as God hath granted ſeverally to men, is, I am ſenſible, their only ſafe guide in an inveſtigation of the ſacred volume. Still, we are fallible and uninſpired; and there is a manifeſt difference between the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles who wrote, and us who are merely interpreters of their writings. To ſay, there are not many and great obſcurities in theſe writings, is to prove that we have never ſtudied them; it is to paſs the ſevereſt cenſure upon thoſe who have devoted their days and nights to ſacred criticiſm. Yet Mr. Fuller ſpeaks and acts as though he were perſuaded that nothing had in

truth been done, or that nothing farther need be attempted in order to amend the tranſlation, and to elucidate the meaning of the Scriptures.

I muſt add, that my ideas of the veneration which men owe to them are countenanced by the ſentiments of a very exemplary prelate *, who obſerves: "To vilify or corrupt the word "of God is an inſult on heaven; but to beſtow "intenſe thought and labour on it, that all may "read it with every poſſible advantage, is to "treat it with becoming attention, and with "that kind of religious veneration which it de-"mands."

It ſeems, on the other hand, the purpoſe of Mr. Fuller to inſinuate, that no man can reverence the Scriptures, who admits not their inſpiration. He uſes the term *inſpiration*, nevertheleſs, as I have already remarked, without appearing to affix to it any determinate idea; and from theſe vague and general premiſes he deduces his concluſion.

Inſpiration is knowledge, power, or aſſiſtance ſupernaturally communicated by God to the mind of a reaſonable being. Thoſe *perſons* are inſpired who poſſeſs ſuch knowledge, power, or aſſiſtance; thoſe *books* are ſpoken of as inſpired,

* Abp. Newcome's Hiſtorical View of Engliſh Biblical Tranſlations, page 200.

of

of which the writers are thought to have been furniſhed immediately by the Deity with ideas, with language, or with both in the compoſition of them, or to have been miraculouſly aided by him in the exerciſe of their memory and judgment, or to have been preſerved by his direct ſuperintendance from error as to ſentiment or to facts. That inſpiration is poſſible, no believer in the ſupremacy and omnipotence of God can diſpute; that it would be imparted upon certain occaſions, and for certain purpoſes, is equally manifeſt. But then a conſideration of the divine wiſdom and goodneſs forbids us to ſuppoſe, that it would be afforded in any caſes, excepting thoſe where it is abſolutely requiſite.

The Scriptures conſiſt of various books, prophetic, hiſtoric, epiſtolary, legiſlative, devotional and moral. Who, now, will aſſert, that inſpiration was alike eſſential to all theſe writings? Shall we imagine, that the Deity employs a miracle to accompliſh ends which may be attained by means of the natural faculties and advantages of mankind?

It has been ſaid, however, that if we deny or limit the inſpiration of the Scriptures, we invalidate their authority as a rule of faith, a guide of conduct, a foundation of hope. This charge, I reply, ariſes from the confuſion of two ideas which ought ever to be kept aſunder. There is

ſurely a very clear diſtinction between the divinely endowed teacher of a doctrine, and the hiſtorian who records the principal events attending the publication of that doctrine. Are men unable without the aſſiſtance of inſpiration to commit to writing a narrative of what they have ſeen and heard? "But this aſſiſtance was needful to ſecure them from error." It was equally needful then for the tranſlators. What, after all, is the fact? The Evangeliſts, with whom we are at preſent chiefly concerned, are known to exhibit many ſlight, indeed, yet real variations. There are ſome diſſonances in their accounts; and this circumſtance is likewiſe known to form a ſtrong internal preſumption of the truth and authenticity of their writings. Contend therefore for their inſpiration, where no inſpiration was required or was claimed, and you deprive us of one of the beſt arguments in favour of Chriſtianity, and of the credibility of it's records. You will alſo become averſe, as is ſeen to be Mr. Fuller's caſe, from examining the Scriptures agreeably to the rules of juſt interpretation.

By theſe rules, the texts which are uſually conſidered as declaring the inſpiration of the ſacred volume ought to be inveſtigated. That in 2 Tim. iii. 16, has often been adduced. We learn from the 15th verſe, that it relates ſimply to the Jewiſh Scriptures. It affirms not however, that

theſe are without any exception inſpired. The language of the author is, " all divinely-inſpired " Scripture, is likewiſe profitable for doctrine, " &c." Our tranſlators, indeed, have rendered it " all Scripture is given by inſpiration of God ;" but the verb *is* they have printed in Italics, and thus marked as being their own inſertion. According to the judgment of Paul, therefore, the writings of the Old Teſtament ſtand not exactly upon the ſame ground in this reſpect. He appears to have adverted to the natural diſtinction which ſhould here be made between the prophetic ones and the others. That a perſon delivering a prediction, or a doctrine from God, muſt have been ſo far inſpired, is a ſelf-evident poſition; but the texts which alledge and prove this point, prove not the inſpiration of the remaining books of Scripture. Inſpiration, for example, is never claimed by the writers of the Goſpels. On the contrary, they reſt their claim to univerſal regard and belief on the principle, that of facts which they record they were either the eye and ear witneſſes, or that thoſe facts were delivered to them upon the authority of the ſpectators and the hearers *. In writing reſpectively memoirs of their maſter they wanted not inſpiration. They were fully able to relate

* Luke i. 1—5. John xxi. 24. 1 John i. 2, 3.

events.

events ſo deeply impreſſed upon their memories and their hearts; and their ſimple, artleſs compoſitions bear the ſtrongeſt poſſible marks of truth and nature.—It is, I know, inferred by ſome perſons from John xiv. 26. xvi. 13, that a promiſe of ſupernatural aid in the recollection and communication of our Lord's diſcourſes was given to the Apoſtles. But theſe paſſages furniſh no evidence that the Apoſtles were to be thus aſſiſted as hiſtorians. They ſpeak, it ſeems, of that more perfect acquaintance with the ſpiritual nature of the Chriſtian diſpenſation, and with the language of Jeſus upon this ſubject, which his immediate diſciples were to poſſeſs after his reſurrection. With regard to Paul and the other authors of the epiſtles, it is manifeſt that they were inſpired preachers of the Goſpel. As writers, however, they by no means lay claim, univerſally, to inſpiration. Upon particular occaſions they profeſſedly deliver the commandments of the Lord; at other times, they diſtinguiſh between their own directions and divine communications *.

The popular tenet concerning the inſpiration of the Scriptures, has not been called in queſtion only by Unitarian Chriſtians. He muſt indeed

* On 1 Cor. vii. 10, 11. ſee, however, Marſh's note to page 86, (No. 22) of Michaelis' Introd. Vol. I.

be

be unacquainted with theological ſtudies, who is ignorant that ſentiments agreeable to thoſe which I have now advanced upon this topic have been delivered alſo by Trinitarian writers. It ſhould farther be remarked, and it could not ſurely be unknown to our author, that the inquiry, whether the Scriptures be plenarily inſpired or not, is totally beſide the queſtion, whether they teach the ſimple humanity of Chriſt. The believer in this latter doctrine, admits it on principles equally ſeparate from the caſe of inſpiration, and from that of non-inſpiration. To the authority of Prophets, Evangeliſts, and Apoſtles, he bows not leſs humbly and ſincerely than Mr. Fuller; although, unlike him, he endeavours to diſcriminate between the additions, or the gloſſes of tranſlators, and the true meaning of the writers.

To my reaſoning upon the ſtrict conſiſtency of the Unitarian principles with the ſtrongeſt faith in Chriſtianity, no anſwer has been given by our author. He complains, however, that I have omitted to notice the evidence by which he ſupported his propoſition upon the ſubject. Concerning this ſtatement I have only to obſerve, that I am unaccuſtomed to apply the word *evidence* to the anonymous information, the unauthenticated reports, and the partial comments of our opponents. The reader will here, as in other caſes, compare the remarks of Mr. Fuller

with

with what I have written on this head, and will then decide whether this *evidence* be invalidated or not by the conſiderations which I have offered.—Every page of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory abounds in proofs that the phraſes *deiſm*, *infidelity*, &c. have been laviſhly applied to unpopular ſects, by men who have ſtood on the vantage ground of public favour and opinion.

Although I agree not with Mr. Fuller as to the meaning which he aſſigns of our Lord's words in John xiv. 28, although I remain of opinion, that the expoſition of them which I have propoſed is ſanctioned by the context, yet I am happy that he is willing to decide for himſelf reſpecting the juſt interpretation of the paſſage, without acquieſcing in the ſenſe put upon it either by Trinitarian or by Socinian commentators.

I have now delivered my ſtrictures upon whatever in his performance ſeemed deſerving of regard, with reference to the ſubject under diſcuſſion.—As to his *review of the reviewers*, it would ill become me to inquire into its decency, its propriety, or its juſtneſs; and concerning his inſinuations, that I am in alliance with thoſe reviewers, I will only ſay that they are totally unfounded. While, however, truth and virtue are the ſole objects of his purſuit, while he is conſcious of a candid and ingenuous deport-

ment,

ment, why ſhould he be thus affected by the remarks of literary journaliſts? His notice of them may provoke a ſmile or a frown from his readers; but it proves merely that he is mortified and diſpleaſed.

It is obſervable, that the language of the profeſſed controverſialiſt, of military warfare, is very familiar to this writer. He perpetually ſpeaks, for example, of unfair ground, diſadvantageous ground, deciſive engagements, regular engagements, feints, allies, retreats, running fights, and pitched battles; and forgetting that others are to adjudge the victory, he ſounds with confidence the notes of triumph.

In my diſcourſe, I endeavoured to conſider the moral tendency of the Unitarian doctrine, as it ought always to be conſidered, ſimply upon it's own merits. I knew, indeed, and I diſtinctly ſtated, that the truth of our religious opinions is to be demonſtrated by other evidence. But ſince much ſtreſs was laid upon this argument by our opponents, and ſince the Unitarian principles had, in my judgment, been groſsly miſapprehended and traduced, I was naturally deſirous of removing prejudice, and of conciliating diſaffection. I aimed at the ſame time, to put aſide every thing irrelative to the queſtion, ſuch as the critiques of the author, whom I avowedly had in view, upon individual writers, his numerous

quotations of texts which had frequently been examined, and his renewed diſcuſſion of topics which had often been previouſly ſubmitted to the public. It is the province of the reader to decide upon the whole, whether my ſermon furniſh or not a competent anſwer to the ſubſtance of Mr. Fuller's Letters, though I repeat, that the primary end of it was rather illuſtrative than controverſial. The reply of this writer has fully ſatisfied me on two points. It has ſhewn in the firſt place, that my remarks are regarded as being, in ſome degree at leaſt, pertinent to the topic of which I profeſſed to treat. And it has alſo furniſhed me with additional conviction, that an author who cites the Scriptures in the manner of Mr. Fuller, and who uſes his ſtile of diſputation, was unentitled, on every principle, to minuter notice; as he now is to any farther ſhare of my attention.

Here then I conclude. Could I hope that my labours, whatever they are, in this controverſy, might ſerve to correct miſapprehenſion, to ſoften bigotry, to repreſs confidence, to ſhew upon what principles, and by what ſtandard, the queſtion between Calviniſts and Socinians, between Trinitarians and Unitarians, ought to be decided,—could I hope they might contribute to inſpire Chriſtians of every denomination with genuine candour and liberality, to animate them to ſerious

piety

piety and exemplary virtue, and, in a word, to incite men to embrace and adorn the doctrine which, as I have attempted to prove, is a *doctrine according to godlineſs*—if ſuch be in any meaſure the effect of what I have written, I ſhall have cauſe to reflect upon the diſcuſſion with humble gratitude and pleaſure.

FINIS.

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MDZ Münchener DigitalisierungsZentrum Digitale Bibliothek

Kentish, John

Strictures Upon The Reply Of Mr. A. Fuller to Mr. Kentish's Discourse Entitled The Moral Tendency Of The Genuine Christian Doctrine

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